

**MEMORANDUM****TO:** District Board of Zoning Adjustment**FROM:** Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director Development Review & Historic Preservation**DATE:** June 14, 2011**SUBJECT: BZA 18227 –1700 New York Avenue NW – Corcoran Gallery of Art****I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION**

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of special exception relief to permit an office use in the SP-2 District pursuant to § 508 and from the roof structure requirements of § 411.5 to accommodate the proposed office addition to the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

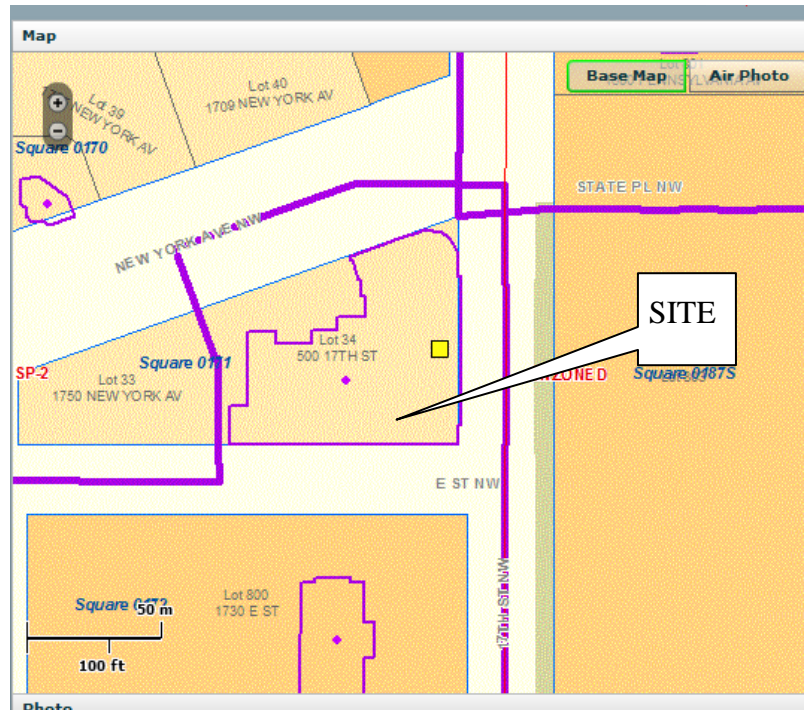
OP also recommends **approval** of variance relief to permit 3.52 FAR where the maximum permitted FAR is 3.5 (§ 531) and from the parking requirements to permit 44 spaces where 83 are required (§ 2101).

II. AREA AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address:	500 17 th Street NW /1700 New York Avenue, NW
Legal Description:	Square 171, Lot 34
Ward:	Ward 2, ANC-2A
Zoning:	SP-2
Lot Characteristics:	The lot is irregularly shaped and contains 68,231 square feet of land area. The property is improved with the Corcoran Gallery of Art (Corcoran), a historic landmark, and an accessory surface parking lot. The Gallery is an irregularly-shaped building with 125,545 square feet of gross floor area and occupies approximately seventy percent of the lot.
Adjacent Properties:	West: The Corcoran is adjacent to the United Unions Building, with frontage on E Street, 17 th Street and New York Avenue. North: Across NY Ave –FDIC and AIA offices South: Across E Street – American Red Cross Headquarters East: Across 17 th Street- Ellipse and the Old Executive Office Building
Neighborhood Character:	The Corcoran is located within the Central Employment Area (CEA) and among several private and federal office buildings.



III. MAPS



Site Location

Picture of Site



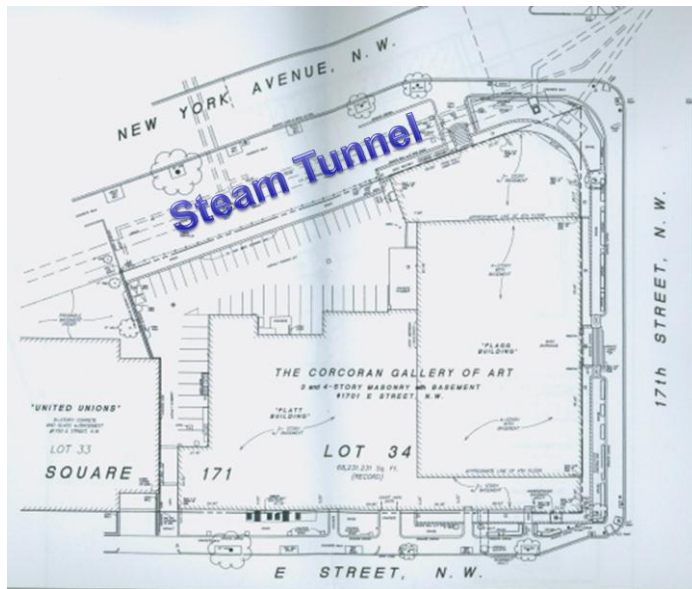
IV. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The property is located in the Seventeenth Street Historic District and is listed as the Corcoran as a landmarked building. Development on the property is subject to review by the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA). CFA's report is included in the applicant's June 6, 2011 submission as Exhibit D.

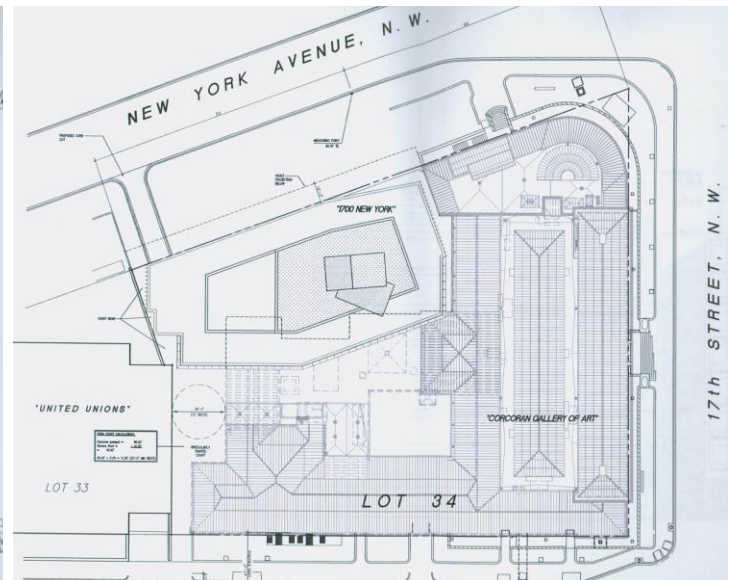
V. PROPOSAL

The applicant wishes to construct an eight-story office addition to the rear of the historic resource in the area of the existing 20-space surface parking. The historic resource will continue to be occupied by the art gallery while the 114,264 square foot addition would be devoted to office use. The property is encroached upon by 431.5 square feet of the abutting Union Building. The total square footage of the building, including the new addition and the encroachment would be 240,240.5 square feet equivalent to 3.52 FAR. Three levels of below-grade floors would be provided, including two levels of parking for 44 spaces and a cellar floor for additional office use. Thirty-three tandem in- vault spaces and five tandem spaces within the parking levels would also be included in the design to supplement the parking needs of the office use. Parking would be accessed via the existing curb cut on E Street and would exit onto New York Avenue through a proposed curb cut.

The building's design includes contemporary glass on a white marble base and would meet LEED Gold requirements under the Core and Shell rating system. In order to accommodate the addition to the historic resource, special exception relief is required to permit an office use in the SP District pursuant to Section 508 of the Zoning Regulations. Variance relief is also required to increase the permitted 3.5 FAR to 3.52 FAR and from the parking requirements per Section 2101. Special exception relief per Section 400.7 to permit unequal height of the penthouse's enclosing walls from the roof level.



Existing Site Plan



Proposed Site Plan

VI. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and REQUESTED RELIEF

SP-2 Zone	Regulation	Existing	Proposed ¹	Relief
Lot Area	None prescribed	68,231.23 sq. ft.	68,231.23 sq. ft.	None required
Height § 530.1	90 ft. max.	66.7 ft.	90 ft.	None required
FAR § 531.1	3.5 (238,809 sf)	1.84 (125,545 sf)	3.52 (240,240.5 sf)	Variance Required
Lot Occupancy § 532.1	100%	72.71%	95.6%	None required
Rear Yard § 534.2	21 ft. min.	47 ft.	47 ft.	None Required
Open Court § 935	4 ft./1ft. of height or a minimum of 12 ft.	None	34 ft	None Required
Parking Spaces § 2101	In excess of 2,000 sf , 1 per each additional 1,800 sf of gfa = 83	20	44	Variance Required
Use	Medium-high density residential/limited office	Art gallery	Art gallery with office	Special Exception required

VII. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS**VARIANCE****i. Exceptional Situation Resulting in a Practical Difficulty**

The property exhibits several characteristics which create an exceptional situation, including:

- The Corcoran's gravel foundation.
- The existing building related improvements which are mounted to exterior walls.
- The encroachment of the Union Building on the Corcoran's property.
- The property's historic landmark designation and its required separation between the proposed addition and the United Union Building.
- The site's nine-foot grade difference from north to south.
- The location of GSA's steam tunnel fifteen feet and parallel to the New York Avenue property line.

FAR

The existing related improvements including the exterior stairs and shafts which currently serve the gallery and are not now included in the building's FAR would be retained and incorporated within the addition. This inclusion would represent more than 1,000 square feet of gross floor area. In addition, the abutting Union Building has 431.5 square feet of gross floor area on the subject site. The total gross floor area added to the FAR (1,431.5 sf) is equivalent to the 0.02 FAR increase requested. Further, the site's inefficiencies also arise from the irregularly shaped building which contributes to an increased core factor beyond that anticipated for a regularly shaped building. Therefore, there is a practical difficulty in designing an efficient building with appropriate massing due to the existing building prior additions and the site constraints presented by the Union Building's encroachment.

¹ Information provided by applicant.

Parking

Eighty three parking spaces would be required for the entire building and 44 spaces would be provided. Thirty-eight tandem spaces would be included to supplement the provided spaces; 33 of which would be located in public vault spaces. Five tandem spaces would be located within the two below-grade parking levels.

The garage is restricted because the building area of the addition is hemmed in between the historic resource and the General Service Administration's (GSA) steam tunnels. Excavation beyond the proposed levels would be difficult and costly as the Corcoran sits on a gravel foundation and further excavation would be detrimental to the historic source. In addition, further excavation beyond the proposed levels to provide the required parking would endanger General Service Administration's (GSA) steam tunnels located outside of the property lines along New York Avenue. GSA has strict requirements regarding any excavation activities near or around steam tunnels which service federal interests and the White House.

Further, the existing building's lot occupancy leaves a small irregularly-shaped footprint within which to accommodate below-grade parking. This factor in combination with the nine-foot grade change would require the garage's ramping system to consume much of the area for zoning-compliant spaces. Thus, the garage has been designed with the anticipation of a new curb cut for exit onto New York Avenue.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

The proposed massing of the addition is similar to immediately adjacent and surrounding buildings and therefore will not be a detriment to the public good. The minimal increase in FAR is directly related to existing site conditions over which the applicant has little control. Light and air to the abutting Union Building would not be adversely impacted due to the required separation that must be maintained to respect the historic resource.

While the provision of vault parking spaces in public space are not included in the number of required spaces, their provision would supplement the required and provide sufficient parking to serve the employees of the gallery and the new office addition. This location is transit rich with easy access to Metrorail, bus and taxis. Therefore, the deficit in the number of required parking spaces is not anticipated to have a substantial detriment to the public good. If the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) does not approve the requested vault spaces, OP would have no objection to the reduced number of spaces that would be provided under Section 2101, as requested in the application.

iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations

The massing of the proposed addition is similar to the adjacent buildings and maintains the architectural integrity of the historic resource. The proposed office building would augment the pattern of uses in area. Therefore, the FAR and parking relief requested would not impair the intent of the Regulations.

SPECIAL EXCEPTION**Office Use in the SP-2 District - § 508**

The Board of Zoning Adjustment is authorized to grant special exception relief to permit office uses within the SP-2 District subject to the provisions of Section 508.

§ 508.3 *The use, height, bulk and design shall be in harmony with existing uses and structures on neighboring property.*

The proposed office addition at 90 feet in height would be consistent with the height of the adjacent United Union Building and other office buildings within the immediate area. The contemporary glass building, with several angled setbacks and reveals respects the historic resource's massing as well as that of its neighbor. Furthermore, the predominant office use of this area makes the proposed use appropriate in this location between the gallery and the surrounding office and federal buildings to the north and northeast. As approved by the Commission of Fine Arts, the height, bulk and design is in harmony with the existing uses and structures on neighboring properties.

§ 508.4 *The use shall not create dangerous or other objectionable traffic conditions.*

The applicant has supplemented the submission with a Traffic Impact Study, noted as Exhibit E in its June 6, 2011 submission. A capacity analysis (coordinated with DDOT) of five intersections indicated that no intersections would exceed acceptable levels of service, with little change anticipated as a result of the trips that would be added due to the office use. OP has not received official comments from DDOT to date regarding any other issues including the proposed curb cut for the New York Avenue exit. OP anticipates DDOT's report under separate cover to the Board.

§ 508.5 *The Board may require special treatment in the way of design, screening of building, accessory uses, signs, and other facilities as it deems necessary to protect the value of neighboring properties.*

The design has been reviewed and approved by the Commission of Fine Arts. Exterior details, including treatment of the public space and signage, would also be subject to the Commission's review to ensure consistency with the intent for the area.

Roof Structure - § 411.5

The design includes three rooftop enclosures, including the cooling tower, the elevator overrun, and the stair tower enclosure. These are located in various locations on the roof and would require a much larger enclosure to encompass these structures. In order to reduce the visual massing and overall building height the penthouse roof is appropriately designed for each of the structure it proposes to enclose. Therefore the taller volume would enclose the elevator and fire stairs and lower enclosures would be sufficient for the cooling towers. These variations have been approved by CFA as respectful of federal view sheds and of superior design for the addition in relation to its historic resource. The enclosures do not adversely impact light and air to adjacent properties and therefore meets the intent of the Regulations and requirements for special exception relief.

Special exception relief would be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map and would not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring properties. The project proposes a suitable expansion of an important historic resource for office use in an appropriate location. Accordingly, the project will not adversely affect adjacent or nearby property and will serve to benefit the Central Employment Area.

VIII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The ANC 2A reviewed the applicant's proposal at its regularly-scheduled public meeting on May 18, 2011 and voted 3-0-1 to support the application. A copy of the letter in support is attached as Exhibit F of the applicant's June 6, 2011 submission.

IX. AGENCY COMMENTS

The District Department of Transportation expects to file a report to the Board under separate cover.

X. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The applicant has incorporated the addition with the historic resource in a manner that allows the addition but respects the historic character of the Corcoran Gallery's Beaux Arts building. In trying to be respectful of the historic resource, the design of the addition has increased the FAR and eliminated the rear surface parking that has existed on the lot. The requested variance to provide on-site parking and minimally increase the FAR beyond that permitted, as well as the grant of special exception relief would not adversely affect the historic resource or the surrounding area. OP therefore recommends approval of the requested special exception and variance relief to facilitate the requested office addition.

JLS/kt